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AUTHOR	Chesler, Mark A.
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Abstract

The nature of student-school conflict was studied through interviews and discussions with students in several crisis-torn secondary schools across the country. Complaints were widely repeated that high school curriculum was not geared to the needs of the noncollege-bound student. Grievances were also expressed over the traditional character of classroom instruction that included exacting control over a student's behavior. Overt and subtle racism in secondary schools has also led to disruptive incidents. The schools' apparent disregard for other social problems including the draft, poverty, and political power inequities has also been attacked by students. It is advocated that teachers and administrators give immediate and constant attention to a reformation of the schools that will alter these conditions. One solution proposes a student-faculty government to establish grievance procedures and to stimulate dialogue between the two groups. If this shared power concept avoids tokenism, the probability of open conflict will be reduced. Instrumental to this effort would be the hiring of competent instructors and the development of public accountability of school systems to the clients they serve. The document includes some role playing exercises that highlight student-school conflict in secondary schools. (LN)

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A Speech Presented at the May 15, 1969 Annual Meeting

of the

Metropolitan Detroit Bureau of School Studies, Inc.
(Reproduced for distribution July, 1969)

Mark A. Chesler

Center for Research on Utilization of Scientific Knowledge

The University of Michigan

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DISSENT AND DISRUPTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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FOREWARD

What are the connections between the "Youth Revolution" of today and the secondary schools of tomorrow? Should those people who run the schools feel they have a "problem" and in what ways should they regard it as something that relates to what they do? Can the "problem" be handled with a few new techniques or does the solution require a major change of behavior among those involved? Does the "problem" reflect pervasive inadequacies in the society and the educational system, and if so, what can educators do about it?

Such questions as these were put before school administrators and board members at the May 15, 1969 Annual Meeting of the Metropolitan Detroit Bureau of School Studies, Inc.

Under the expert leadership of Dr. Mark Chesler from the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, these school administrators and board members were helped to explore their feelings regarding such matters through their participation in role playing exercises that highlighted student-school conflict at the secondary level. Following these experiences, Dr. Chesler challenged those present with a stimulating message concerning "The Dissent and Disruption in Secondary Schools."

It is hoped that his comments will inspire us to look more closely at ourselves and better understand the "problem".

Gerald G. Mansergh
Executive Director

DISSENT AND DISRUPTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by

Mark A. Chesler
The University of Michigan

The disruption and unrest that characterizes many of our secondary schools has its roots deep within the fabric of our society and educational systems. The major problems of the American society are reflected in its schools, and in the lives of young people attending schools. Thus the schools themselves have become the foci for many groups' disaffections with, and desires to change, their environment. The headlines are full of stories of riots and property destruction in schools, of the rare stabbing of teachers and of occasional injury to students by their fellows. But the students' ongoing exposure to dehumanizing and brutal conditions is often overlooked. Therefore let me remind you, with a few actual examples, of some of these student grievances. It is my hope that these examples will remind us of the reality sufficiently to understand some of the issues to which we must address ourselves. Students' concerns gain broad public attention when they are expressed in ways that disrupt orderly school processes; then student frustration and pain creates unrest and subsequent "crises" for school administrators. Any attempt to understand such "administrative crises" must begin with the crises students feel they face daily; crises that are perpetrated or exacerbated by the character of their educational experience. The following examples and analyses are drawn from our interviews, discussions and change activities with students in several crisis torn secondary schools across the country.[1]

The Nature of Student "Crises" and Grievances

Youngsters have a variety of complaints about the high school curriculum. Much of our curriculum is seen as irrelevant for students not going to college; they point out that it typically emphasizes academic subjects and does not help them prepare for the non-college job market. Certainly, a high school diploma no longer guarantees a job for anyone. Some protests thus focus on the failure of current vocational education, on obsolete machine tool shops, and on a lack of school-industrial collaboration, especially in urban black schools. In more affluent suburban schools a similar concern is raised with regard to the pre-college curriculum. There, many youngsters argue that college preparation courses do not prepare them for what is likely to happen in college. Partly this results from an over-emphasis on the academic myth of college life and romantic notions of scholarship that do not occur in college, but the concern reflects the non-provocative and non-stimulation character of college preparatory courses in most high schools.

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[1] During the past year our staff has been involved in a pilot project to develop "Alternative Responses to School Crisis". Seven secondary schools have been the sites of experimental programs with students, teachers, principals, other administrators and community members.

A second focus of grievances is the character of classroom instruction. Many students resent what they feel are archaic and traditional forms of instruction, where teachers lecture and students are expected to listen docilely. Many students would like their instructors to experiment with non-graded courses, with individualized instruction, with a more relaxed classroom atmosphere, with the stimulation of free and independent thinking, and the like. The incredibly inefficient use of peer resources as aids and stimulants to student learning is a covert source of tension and competition, and hence anxiety, among youngsters. In some schools concern over the retention and reward of "good" teachers and negative reactions to their "bad" teachers has become a theme of students' collective attention.

A third precipitant of student crisis is the character of teacher and administrator control over their actions. On a school-wide basis this feeling is generated by the high number of rules and regulations by which student behavior is organized throughout the school day. Schedules that require a student to be in a certain place at a certain time, hall passes that account for any deviance from this schedule, and rapid punishment for attempted or supposed non-conformity embody the school's posture of low trust and high control with students. The students' response to such distrust often is distrust in return and alienation, overt withdrawal or sabotage.

Quiet and conforming classroom behavior typically is demanded by teachers who feel the need to control the action. It is not an uncommon experience for students who wish to go to the bathroom during class to be required to raise their hands and announce their need to their teacher and in front of their peers. The request may be an attempt to provoke the teacher; it also may be the outcome of a rather short period of time in which to run from one class to another, and the large numbers of students seeking to use any particular bathroom during class changing times. Some students undoubtedly would rather suffer quietly than deal with their need in public. Others will take, or must take, the opportunity to request a pass to go to the bathroom. Sometimes the teacher gives the pass, and the student merely suffers the indignity of having to announce his need in front of the class. At other times the teacher will check to be sure the student is not testing or provoking by asking: "Do you really need to go?" "Again?" "Are you sure?" This creates and reinforces an unnecessary social embarrassment. For some teachers, no doubt, this is a conscious effort to embarrass students and gain humorous attention at their expense; for others it is symptomatic of a desperate and insensitive need to maintain control and not "be taken advantage of."

Part of this concern about the control apparatus of the school is brought into bold relief by youngsters' articulation of certain areas of their personal behavior where they feel the school should not, in fact, exercise control. Perceptions of civil liberties' violations and the lack of judicial due process are examples of these issues. Students offer an array of perceived violations of good judicial process and civil liberties by adult school authorities, including personal clothing and locker room searches, dress and hair regulations, arbitrary punishments without appeal, premature judgments of guilt without evidence or proof, etc. One of the clearest indications of the privacy problem raised to a systemic level was our own experience in trying to interview students in one high school. The principal asked our staff to give him the names of any SDS members or black militants within his student body. Our team pointed out that to do this would require practicing deceit and divulging private information to the principal; when this did not change the principal's request they naturally refused to comply.

Censorship of student newspapers and other controls on student political activities are usually justified on the basis of professionals' better judgment, greater experience, and concern about the welfare of their charges. As political participation in school becomes a sought-for student "right", these restraints, or the forces of obedient student councils, are especially provocative reminders of students' low status and political impotence.

In many schools students articulate a fourth concern, that teachers and administrators do not behave in courteous and respectful ways toward them. This is the reverse of teachers' common complaint that their students often are defiant and disrespectful toward them. Instructional and interpersonal relationships characterized by educators' condescension and paternalism signify their disinterest in reciprocal human contact with their students. Professional norms against teacher-student "fraternization" increase the interpersonal distance and mistrust between these two groups.

It is not an uncommon practice for principals, vice-principals or physical instructors to administer punishment by paddling students. Needless to say, this is likely to occur more often to poor students than rich students, and to black students than white students. Sometimes male teachers administer such paddling to male students and sometimes they administer it to female students; in some cases any overt implications of sexuality are avoided by having female instructors paddle female students. One principal reported that he usually called in a group of 12 or 15 students, or went into a classroom, when he was about to administer a paddling to a male student. Such circumstances, he argued, made the humiliation he was about to apply much clearer and thus a more effective disciplinary device. Despite this orientation, many youngsters report that they would rather take their disciplinary cases to the principal, and face this paddling, than go to various social workers or counselors within the school. The latter are seen to practice deceit, to tell tales, and to administer an emotional whipping that is regarded by many students as much more painful and humiliating than physical paddling itself.

The fifth focus is reflected in students' direct confrontation of the existence of racism in schools. Sometimes students' concerns about racism focus upon the existence of separate academic tracks or the clear division of black students into non-college preparatory courses. Inappropriate disciplinary or instructional behavior, which appears to unjustly single out blacks for differential treatment, has been the precipitating incident for disruption in many schools. A complete lack of, or minimal number of, black teachers, counselors, clubs, books, and a failure to honor black cultural and political heroes are further student rationales for labeling a school racist. Specific examples of these concerns arise in connection with many schools' reluctance to honor the anniversaries of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or Malcolm X. Further, the lack of courses directly relevant to black experience in America, and the distortion of this experience in "white-oriented" texts and courses, are the sources of much student pain and alienation.

Some school administrations actively have inhibited student interracial social relationships and dating by recording and even reporting to parents, incidents in which white and black students associated with each other. For the school to see this as part of its concern, and to act on it, clearly identifies it as implementing the racially cautious and separate standards for social behavior found elsewhere in the society. Whether or not the school makes an

uniquely racist contribution to the quality of student life, it is by and large clear that few schools have attempted to overcome the vestiges of societal racism that must be present among the ranks of students, teachers, administrators, service personnel and within the curriculum itself. Few schools, for instance, see black-white student relations as a problem to be included in the instructional or curricular design.

In a similar vein, some students are concerned deeply with their schools' apparent disregard for or ignorance of serious social ills. Youngsters wrestling with problems of the draft, and their awareness of social issues such as poverty, morality and powerlessness, constantly seek the wisdom and guidance of their respected elders. The lack of institutional recognition or relevance of such issues, let alone their curricular treatment, is a source of much student guilt and discontent. When their elders, and their educational institutions, appear disinterested or powerless in the face of such issues youth are naturally confused, frustrated and angry.

A final and related tragedy is that many teachers and administrators who would and should object to such violations of educational principles common sense and even decency do not. Some are cowed by their colleagues and expectations of administrator or parental reaction, others are coerced by a professional fraternity into maintaining a code of silence. For a educator to protest strongly current student conditions is to risk being identified "with the kids", a stigma injurious to good peer relations and professional security. Still others are merely biding their time until they can leave school for retirement, marriage, a promotion or new job. Students often perceive such non-involvement as evidence of adult hypocrisy and the lack of commitment to the ideas and ideals of a better world. The result is a lose of trust in the persons and institutions established for the welfare and guidance of the young. Without trust, there is only the despair of conformity or apathy and the revoluntionary power of anger and desperate hope.

The existence of these conditions constitute daily and continuing crises in the lives of students attending secondary schools. The multiplication of such conditions, combined with educators' non-responsiveness, inevitably lead to outbreaks of protest and disruption which escalate in school-wide crises. Students often complain that teachers and administrators who do not respect them do not listen to any grievance or argument. Many students say that demonstrations and protests have erupted because other efforts to get administrators and teachers to listen to their concern and demands were failures. Prompt responses to student concerns, and the implementation of various grievance handling systems or conflict mediating operations, will help deal with the problems of escalation, per se; but they do not deal with the basic conditions of curriculum and instructional irrelevance or incompetence, interpersonal control, brutality or disrespect, and racism which many youngsters feel permeate their lives in school. Only immediate and constant attention to the reformation of our schools will alter these basic conditions; and only such alteration will, in the long run, bring an end to school disruption and progress toward quality education.

Promising Directions for School Change

In a number of cases it is clear that students and educators need help in learning when and how to use each others' resources. The traditional role

obligations of educators, which invests them with the care of their charges, makes it difficult for professionals to see students as being able to contribute to the educative process.

Similarly, students are expected to conform to and accept the judgments, decisions and behaviors of professionally trained personnel. When this orientation is coupled with the social distance inherent in the organized status differences of the school situation, we can see why faculties are not easily involved or prepared for the peer intercourse required for compromise or attention to grievances. Another reason it is difficult to engage students and educators in these processes is that so many people are unskilled in any kind of negotiation. Many students and faculties do not know what it means to compromise, they are dreadfully concerned that in a negotiating situation they are going to lose control over their entire career and organization. When one is in a position of historic power, of course, negotiations do imply new power arrangements and, therefore, some loss of absolute control. These historic and structural barriers to peer exchange may require the presence of a third party referee, consultant or mediator in negotiations. A person trained in school issues could, if he were truly concerned with educational improvement and trusted by competing parties, help move past rhetoric, fear and misunderstanding to redress and change.

We also need to generate and test new models of organizing high schools along lines that do a more effective job of discovering and processing grievances and injustices. Throughout the school year, throughout all of the crises and non-crises, educational and social issues must be discovered and treated before they create disruptive levels of concern. I do not mean we should cool off or repress conflict, or engage in subtle forms of tokenism; nor do I mean that educators should learn how to manipulate or use students as tools to do what faculties originally wanted to do. I do mean that we must try and create social systems where people can pay attention to conflict and dissent long before it gets to open warfare. I also mean we must build new forms of legitimate power in the school that better mirror the current realities of community and student power. It's not just altruism or good intentions that may motivate educators' consideration of these possibilities; often it's only the threat that youngsters' will use power for disruptive purposes that actually promotes their inclusion in legitmate decision-making roles. And it is this reality that will prevent or punish tokenism or deceit in the long run; once aroused and conscious, students are not likely to be duped or manipulated for long.

An example of the concept of shared power could involve the creation of student-faculty committees to establish local curricula, conduct judicial proceedings, and actually help make school policy. This does not mean simply revamping the old, worn out kinds of student governments or the inclusion of a couple of "good" students as advisory members once in a while in faculty meetings. Such programs will not satisfy students who know their governments and councils have not been meaningful political systems in the past. The distance between students and teachers or administrators in this regard is often quite discouraging. For instance, in one school we have been studying the President of the Student Council resigned because none of the faculty would listen to her. She felt the teachers and administrators maintained tight control over the student council and did not permit it to do meaningful things. Although students voted for student council members, the principal and faculty advisor seemed to make most of the important decisions. When youngsters confronted their faculty advisor and the principal with their feelings, they were

told "well this is the way it is at school board meetings too, this is the powerlessness and futility that we face. So you might as well learn how it feels right now." The youngsters weren't satisfied with that answer, and began to organize new forms of self-government and expression outside of the impotent council.

In order to develop student energy and commitment in the process of school management, more responsive and meaningful political systems will have to be built. One procedure might involve handing major decisions over to a student-faculty government system wherein the principal would operate as an executive secretary responsible to this plural status group. Great care would have to be taken to insure effective use of a feedback system where information and policy preferences were communicated back and forth between representatives and their various constituencies. Together we could stretch our imaginations and no doubt develop many ways in which students can have real power in saying how schools are run. We're certainly not doing so well without students that we can afford to be smug or superior about their talents and potential contributions. It's probably true that many students want no part of this responsibility, but that's not a relevant argument; I believe meaningful participation has such important educative value that we should unilaterally attempt to secure its implementation. Students as well as faculty might gain important experience and have new learning opportunities in the test of representative internal politics. Teachers and administrators, in particular, would have to begin to deal with the school in a representative political, as well as a professionally responsible, manner. If there is to be a chance for anything but brief test sequences and ultimate failure we will have to train all parties for the skillful performance of their new political roles. New structures will not run themselves; they will need to be staffed by participants who are well trained to do their job.

Another innovation which could help adjudicate various interests would be the establishment of an apparatus to handle grievances. Such a mechanism, and the occupants thereof, would have to be more than passive recipients of complaints. Their charge would be to find conflict where it is, create it where it ought to be, and help it get dealt with quickly. They would have the mission to discover, receive, perhaps escalate, and publicize facts and feelings about injustice so it can be dealt with before it explodes into warfare. In order to perform this job, the role occupants would have to be seen as invulnerable and universal presenters and resolvers of school injustices. Persons who wished to report grievances should be granted enough protection from retaliation to facilitate their use of the system. There is no question a grievance system would have to be concerned with the full range of school issues, as much with student or principal injustices to teachers as well as vice versa. Through the operation of this procedure smoldering anxieties, tensions, disagreements and conflicts may not have to stay so hidden or repressed that they burst forth in drastic and uncontrollable forms. It is, of course, yet another question as to how, and how effectively, any appeal body actually may deal with the issues raised. As with other alternatives, special training will have to be given to role occupants and to students and faculties in experimental schools, so that all parties may be prepared for new rules and procedures. Moreover, faculties and students will have to keep a watchful eye over this process to guard against its use as an administrative control device or a student Kangeroo Court.

Another range of possibilities lie in the general effort to make schools and faculties publicly accountable to the clients whom they serve. Educators

are, rather typically of professionals, not accountable to the consumers of their works, but to their own professional guardians. This protects educators from consumer pressures in important ways, but it also robs their clients of the effectiveness of appeals of arbitrary behavior. Public scrutiny of the average reading scores in comparable classes or schools is one way a community can begin to assess staff performance. Such evaluation makes schools and schoolmen more accountable to parents and citizens for what they do with their youngsters. Another, more intimate, form of feedback could involve students in evaluating the professional behavior and performance their faculty members exhibit in the classroom.

Another important step in the development of public accountability would be to create new linkages between schools and the communities they serve. This emphasis would require schools extending themselves into communities as well as reaching out to enlist communities in educational policies and affairs. In practice this probably would mean the utilization of store front classrooms, of freedom schools, of course credit for varied experiences both inside and outside the school. It also would mean the use of parents as full teaching colleagues, the inclusion of a group of community agency people advising principals in the management of the school, and the preparation of parents to manage the schools.

We also will need to develop new course content and better models for the transmission of intellectual content and experience. One possibility is to provide students with course credit for analyses and treatments of issues confronting the schools. Perhaps a dozen students can meet regularly with the principal of the high school; their job may be to learn about schools, to learn about the politics of education in the community, to create special courses in race relations or black studies, to design a new way of running the high school the next year, or to actually run it. When students get course credit for such planning it is not seen as an extra-curricular activity, but rather as fundamental to the educational process. This planning activity for a small group could be broadened into a course for large numbers in the legitimate curriculum.

Perhaps it is not necessary to note that the recruitment of sympathetic and effective teachers is absolutely necessary. In the absence of such skillful legions many educators hoped that counselors would be directly helpful to students with complaints. Counselors have failed almost completely at this job, and their function is being taken over by young black faculty members and occasionally by exciting whites. Counselors themselves are almost never mentioned as people who can be depended upon to raise real problems, who can keep confidences, or who will stand up for students' concerns. The excorcising of these counselor functions, and the training and development of teachers who can teach well and demonstrate their concern for students seems to be an important, albeit traditional, priority.

Unless we are really prepared to do more than talk about change there is no point in entering into cross-racial or cross-generational dialogue. And if we are prepared, we have to demonstrate very quickly that we are. There have been so many false starts, unkept promises and unworthy trusts, that I wouldn't blame anyone for not investing heavily in another false start. Some youngsters are saying, for instance, "I'm tired of talking. I am not coming to another damn meeting unless the principal does something to demonstrate his good faith. I have stopped messing around." Many students are still prepared to talk and make new starts; but it is not clear how long they will stay this way. It seems worthwhile, in terms of the stakes that are abound, to invest in some dialogue; but it is necessary to caution educators to invest in dialogue only if they are willing to commit themselves to taking some action on the just grievances presented. Otherwise, we may as well be prepared for continuing and increasing confrontation and disruption in our schools.

ROLE PLAYING EXERCISES THAT HIGHLIGHT STUDENT-SCHOOL CONFLICT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS*

*Designed by the staff at the Center for Research on the Utilization of Scientific Knowledge, The University of Michigan.

INTERGENERATIONAL FOCUS

SCENE I

General Situation

School protests occurred in some neighboring high schools this past week; there were also some rumblings in your school. The school principal has been quoted in the local newspaper as believing that most disruption is caused by a few troublemakers, some of whom aren't even students. Moreover, he has said he doesn't expect serious trouble in this school because: (1) there are a few problems; (2) he is always ready to listen to students; and (3) students know he will deal firmly with any disruptive behavior.

This is a large high school drawing most students from middle-class and upper middle-class backgrounds. About 90% of the students are white and 10% are black.

Several students are talking together to prepare to ask the principal for a meeting to discuss some concerns.

Roles

B/Student #1: You helped organize student volunteers for the Kennedy campaign last summer. Now you're becoming involved in anti-war activity. School rules prohibit wearing buttons or passing out literature.

B/Student #2: You helped write the first issue of an underground newspaper critical of administrative paternalism. It reviewed modern entertainment and used some profanity. School personnel do not know who wrote it.

B/Student #3: You've just inherited six beautiful skirts from your sister at college. School officials threatened to send you home if you wore skirts that were too short.

B/Student #4: Last year you led a small demonstration protesting the school's remaining open during the funeral of Martin Luther King. You don't trust the newspaper, and want to know exactly what the principal said.

B/Student #5: You're a junior - one of the "brains." You've just received traditional English, History, and Social Studies texts. You and some of your friends want to study modern literature like Camus, Mailer, Malcolm X, Phillip Roth and John Hersey instead, and have a course on the origin and development of the Vietnamese War. If a teacher can't work on it, you want to run it yourselves.

SCENE II

General Situation

The students from Scene I, in addition to the following role occupants, are now gathered together in the principal's office for a meeting.

Roles

Principal: You are now at the center of a rather difficult situation. You have been principal here for 9 years. When you came nobody ever protested anything out loud, and nothing here has changed, so its hard to understand why there's so much noise now. Over 75% of these kids do go on to college, so they must be getting a good education.

Superintendent: (acting as an alter-ego to the principal) You want to impress upon the principal that he should not make any rash moves that would upset the community. Certainly he must be aware of the need for stability in the schools.

Assistant minister of large church: (acting as an alter-ego to the principal) You are anxious for the principal to take students seriously. Most of their demands sound rather reasonable, especially when compared to the strict rules the school system has now established. The principal is in your congregation.

Newspaperman: You will knock on the door shortly after the meeting starts, introduce yourself and ask if you can attend. This sounds like hot stuff and you'd like to get in on it.

Several students: (As in Scene I)

INTERRACIAL FOCUS

SCENE I

General Situation

Civil disturbances have occurred in your city during the summer. Partly as a result the principals' advisory council has set a number of new rules on a city-wide basis. In your school there have been no serious incidents or disturbances yet. This is a large high school, drawing its students from several areas of the city. About 60% of the students are white and about 40% are black.

The new rules consist of the following:

1. No large groups shall congregate in the halls.
2. There will be appropriate dress worn - no shorts, blue jeans, excessive jewelry, exotic hairdos or dark glasses.
3. No groups that are not officially sponsored by the school will be allowed to meet or gather in or near the school building.
4. There will be no public display of affections between students.
5. Radios will not be played in school.
6. When moving in the halls, students will walk and keep to the right at all times.

There are several policemen stationed in the halls of the school during the first week; they are there to prevent trouble that there has been rumors about.

Roles

Student #1: Yesterday you were sent home by the assistant principal for wearing African jewelry to school.

Student #2: You heard from a friend of yours that last week a policeman had told him, "slow down, nigger, don't run in the halls".

Student #3: Last week, on the first day of class, 3 students asked the history teacher about some black history. The teacher replied that she couldn't do that until it was instituted as part of the school curriculum. Besides, she said, the whole idea of black history is very controversial now; she wasn't sure anything like that existed.

Student #4: You are taking the leadership in establishing an Afro-American fraternity in school, and have organized a group of students who have asked for official approval. Other fraternities sometimes function as clubs, and meet in the school. The principal has not met with you to answer this request yet.

Student #5: You have heard a number of stories and incidents similar to the ones being shared by your colleagues, but you're not sure any of them are important enough to make a fuss about. Probably the teachers and the principal will take care of them without much fuss.

SCENE II

General Situation

The students from Scene I, as well as the following role occupants, are now gathered together in the principal's office for a meeting.

Roles

Principal: You are now at the center of a rather difficult situation. You are white, and you have been principal here for 9 years. When you came the school was 95% white and nobody ever protested anything out loud.

Superintendent: (acting as an alter-ego to the principal) You want to impress upon the principal that he should not make any rash moves that would upset either the white or black communities. Certainly he must be aware of the need for stability in the schools.

Assistant minister of a large white church: (acting as a alter-ego to the principal) You are anxious for the principal to take the students seriously. Most of their demands sound rather reasonable, especially when compared to the strict rules the school system has now established. The principal is in your congregation.

Newspaperman: You will knock on the door shortly after the meeting starts, introduce yourself, and ask if you can attend. This sounds like hot stuff and you'd like to get in on it.

Several students: (As in Scene I)